Executive Summary

Sound Transit Capital Program

Agency Activities and Monitored Issues

Potential to open U-Link early

Construction on the University Link light rail extension between downtown Seattle and the University of Washington is going well and Sound Transit is looking at possibly opening service earlier than the scheduled date of September 2016. Exactly how early is still undetermined; the agency expects to know more by the end of the year.

The U-Link project is about 75 percent complete, trending at $107 million under budget and has almost six months of "float" in the schedule. In addition, the construction phases that posed the most risk to the original schedule–the twin tunnel mining and station excavation–are complete.

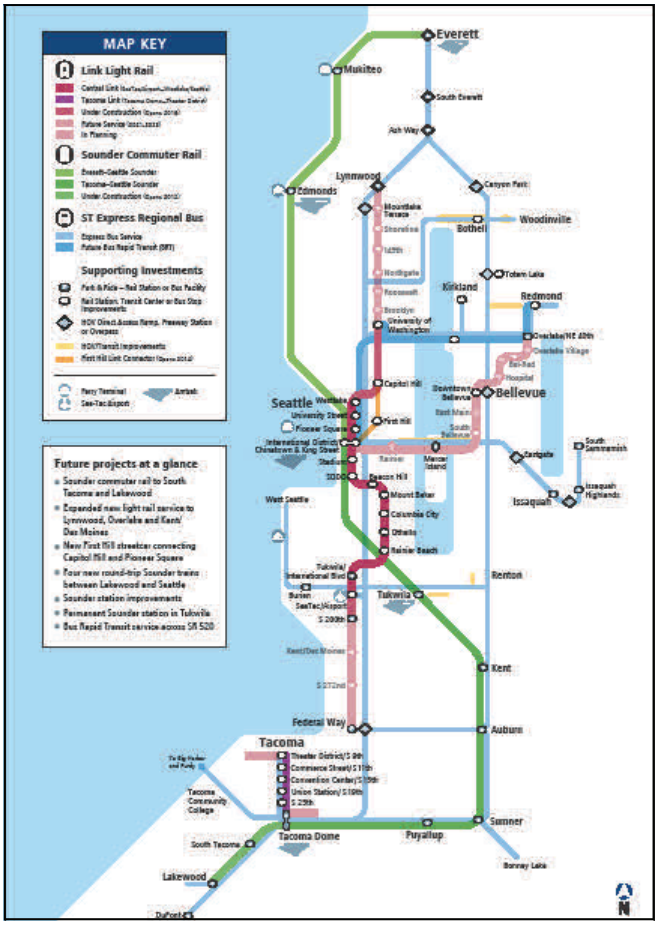
Opening early would require close coordination with Sound Transit's contractors and partners at King County Metro, the City of Seattle, and the University of Washington.

Long-Range Plan update

Starting this fall, community members around the region will have a chance to begin weighing in on where mass transit should go after the planned 2023 completion of Sound Transit's currently funded projects.

The agency's Long-Range Plan was last updated in 2005. An environmental impact statement process that gets underway in October will revisit long-term priorities and explore how the agency should prepare to serve more riders as the region's population grows approximately 30 percent by 2035, according to Puget Sound Regional Council projections.

The Long-Range Plan provides the vision for future transit expansions and acts as the basis for projects that could be selected for inclusion in future ballot measures.



Current and future transit improvements

Major Service changes

Major Service changes for Sound Transit buses and trains kicked off in late September. The changes included the launch of another round-trip train on the Sounder south line between Lakewood and Seattle and improvements designed to make it easier and less crowded to ride ST Express buses between Snohomish County and Seattle.

For the first time ever, passengers are able to ride the ST Express Route 592 from Olympia and Lacey to Seattle and back. The service to Olympia is in partnership with Intercity Transit and funded by a Washington State Department of Transportation Regional Mobility Grant.

Agency Activities and Monitored Issues *continued . . .*

2014 draft budget released

Sound Transit's proposed 2014 budget, which was released to the Sound Transit Board in September, keeps the agency focused on building and operating the regional transit system, including major extensions to the Link light rail program north, south, and east. In addition, during 2014, the agency expects to carry over 30 million passengers on its trains and buses, the most ever.

The proposed budget for 2014 is $1.1 billion, relatively unchanged from the 2013 adopted budget. Nearly two-thirds of the budget is spent on the Capital program, which is continuing the planning, design, and build-out of the regional transit system. Total spending for delivering projects is budgeted at $719 million. The operating budget in 2014 is $221 million, up 4.2 percent compared to the 2013 adopted budget. The administrative budget, which includes most Sound Transit employees, goods and services is $159 million.

The Sound Transit Board committees will consider pieces of the budget this fall and the entire budget will be up for adoption by the full Board later this year.

TIGER Grant money

Sound Transit learned recently that it is receiving $24 million in federal TIGER grant dollars for two important projects.

The agency will receive $14 million to help add HOV lanes in both directions and provide other improvements to prepare the I-90 Bridge for light rail. The I-90 work, which is being done along with the state Department of Transportation, is part of the East Link light rail extension.

In addition, the agency will receive $10 million for work to replace the 100-year-old Tacoma Trestle Bridge. The new Tacoma Trestle will allow for future expansion of passenger rail service for both high-speed rail and commuter rail and expands freight rail capacity around the Port of Tacoma.

Tacoma Link fares

Following Sound Transit Board action, the adult fare to ride Tacoma Link trains will be a dollar starting in September 2014.

That fare, which will help fund the system's operation, will increase to $1.50 in September 2016. Youth riders will pay $0.75, while senior and disabled riders will pay $0.50 to ride Tacoma Link in 2014, with an increase to $0.75 in 2016.

Tacoma Link rides have been free since service started 10 years ago under a policy that allows free service when it costs more to collect fares than what the fares would generate. But today, Tacoma Link provides about a million rides annually and that policy no longer applies.

Edmonds parking open

Additional Sounder parking is now available in Edmonds.

A 103-space surface lot next to Edmonds Station opened recently under a five-year lease agreement with Sound Transit. A temporary 53-space lot was available for passenger use since late last year.

The new lot should help relieve the stress of finding parking at the station.

Agency Activities and Monitored Issues *continued . . .*

Happy birthday Central Link

July 19 was the fourth anniversary of the launch of Central Link light rail service.

Ridership on the Link line between Seattle and Sea-Tac Airport has steadily improved over the years and so far the service has carried more than 30 million riders.

The average daily ridership on Link is more than 32,000.

Lakewood pedestrian bridge open

A pedestrian bridge that provides a safe, direct path to the Lakewood Station trains and buses is now open.

The bridge runs from the third floor of the station's parking garage across the existing railroad tracks to Kendrick Street SW. Sound Transit provided about $250,000 in funding to this City of Lakewood project that also includes a plaza connecting the bridge to a cul-de-sac at the roadway's southern terminus.

The bridge is particularly useful to neighborhoods west of the station where pedestrians were forced to walk well out of their way to reach the station. The Lakewood Station is served by Sounder trains and ST Express and Pierce Transit buses.